

System Configuration Team (SCT)

Reasonable & Prudent Measure #26

Meeting Notes

December 13, 2000

Greetings and Introductions.

The December 13 meeting of the System Configuration Team was held at NMFS' Portland offices. The meeting was chaired by Bill Hevlin of NMFS and facilitated by Trish McCarty. The agenda and a list of attendees for the December 13 meeting are attached as Enclosures A and B.

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed at the meeting, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced may be too lengthy to routinely include with the meeting notes; copies of all enclosures referred to in the minutes are available upon request from Kathy Ceballos of NMFS at 503/230-5420.

1. Update on John Day Extended-Length Screen Program.

John Kranda reminded the group that, at its last meeting, there had been some discussion of the options for moving ahead with the John Day extended-length screen program; including the possibility of changing the mesh size for those screens to 1.75 mm. In the course of that discussion, it was agreed that FFDRWG would get together and discuss that issue, Kranda said; that special meeting hasn't happened, but this issue will be on the agenda for the January 4 FFDRWG meeting.

In the meantime, Kranda said, we told the contractor to stop working on the VBS screen with 1/8" bar spacing and make the change to 1.75 mm, reducing the FY'01 budget for this item by \$1 million. The contractor is now moving ahead with that work, but the screen will not be ready for in-water testing until FY'02. We've also talked about modifying the existing screens to meet the 1.75 mm criteria, Kranda said.

There may also be a need for additional modeling, said Steve Rainey. They will discuss that at the January 4 FFDRWG meeting, Kranda replied. The big issue will likely be whether this criteria will also be applied to Bonneville 1, he said; if so, there will definitely be a need for additional modeling and testing. Anyway, said Kranda, there will be more to come on this issue after FFDRWG discusses it. Tom Lorz applauded this change, noting that the smaller bar spacing will be better from a lamprey impingement standpoint.

So what will now be accomplished in FY'01? Hevlin asked. We will get the screen rebuilt and the existing ESBS prototypes modified, Kranda replied; we will also do the modeling work needed to modify the perf plates for those screens, as necessitated by the narrower mesh to achieve the hydraulic conditions we had modeled previously. If orifice modifications are necessary to rectify the gateway hydraulics situation, Kranda said, that could be a problem we need to solve in FY'03.

Are these changes reflected in the current spreadsheet? McCarty asked. Yes – our estimate for this project has been reduced from \$4 million to \$3 million, Kranda replied. And FFDRWG will be discussing the criteria for this system at their January meeting? Hevlin asked. Yes, Kranda replied.

2. FY'01 CRFM Program – Update on Appropriations and Budget.

Kranda said he had put the items that caused the most concern last meeting back into the FY'01 spreadsheet – McNary adult fallback, Ice Harbor AWS, John Day screens, John Day North Shore AWS, John Day system lamprey study and John Day holding and transition pool. He explained where each of these items have been placed on the spreadsheet, then said the Corps is asking that \$7 million-\$12 million be restored from the \$13 million deducted from the FY'01 CRFM budget for savings and slippage in order to conduct this work. The \$12 million figure includes \$5 million, tentatively, for the Bonneville outfall, Kranda said.

So that's where we are, said Kranda – those items have all been re-funded on the current spreadsheet, and the project managers will continue to work them. The touchiest item is probably the Ice Harbor AWS, he said; while we are basically overprogramming ourselves, which we have done in the past, we will get some additional funds from savings and slippage, and I think that in the long run we should be OK. In response to a question, Kranda said he does not know, at this point, when he will get an answer from Corps headquarters on the requested restoration of savings and slippage.

Kranda distributed Enclosure C, an updated CRFM measures worksheet showing the estimated cost of each line-item for the period FY'01-FY'10. So you're moving out on FY'01 activities based on an estimate of \$82.7 million? Rod Woodin asked. Minus \$5 million for the Bonneville work, Kranda replied – we're assuming a budget of \$77.9 million, at this point.

In response to a question, Kranda said the Corps is going to propose a meeting on December 20 to discuss the 2001 spill survival and FPE studies. There is certainly interest in re-doing the spring and summer spill survival tests at Ice Harbor in 2001, said Hevlin; what we saw last year was high survival for spring migrants and lower survival for summer fish. It's an issue that will be discussed further at the Studies Review Work Group, he said. It was agreed that it may be problematic to do a similar test at McNary this year, due to changing spill patterns and the construction of end-bay deflectors at that project.

Does this version of the spreadsheet answer the concern raised at the last meeting? McCarty asked. Yes – they're back on the table and moving forward, Woodin replied, and now we just have to hope the funding will be forthcoming.

The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to the out-year budget estimates included in the spreadsheet; Kranda noted that, while some of these budgetary assumptions may be a little soft, they were the best the Corps can make at this time. There are a number of decision-points that will have a profound effect on the total budget of the 10-year CRFM program, he said; until those decisions are made, the crystal ball is a little hazy. In response to a question from Bruce Suzumoto, Kranda said the Corps is in the process of developing a list of the future capital construction items and costs associated with each project, in particular, Bonneville, John Day and The Dalles, the projects that have major decision points in the out-years. Suzumoto said it would be helpful, at some point, for the SCT to take a look at this list.

The group discussed the impact of the new BiOp's performance standards and one- and five-year planning processes on this list; Kim Fodrea raised the concern that the SCT process, and this list, may need to change to be consistent with the measures called for in the BiOp. Steve Rainey replied that he expects the measures and performance standards called for in the BiOp to be consistent with what the SCT has laid out in the spreadsheet. Fodrea said she is concerned that the list of measures included in the current spreadsheet may be too broad; there are likely to be some specific performance measures on which the SCT may need to focus, say, 75% of its effort.

Phil Thor observed that there are some very large costs listed in the out-years of this spreadsheet. If Congress doesn't provide enough money to do the plan as laid out, he said, decisions will need to be made on the items that will and won't move forward. In the past, that has been the purview of this group, Thor said; in the future, that will likely include some additional steps, because the action agencies will want to be sure that the items that get cut aren't critical to meeting the BiOp performance standards. Because we're tasked to meet the performance standards, he said, we will take a keen interest in making sure that the funded items help us meet those standards. Hevlin noted that the performance standards, as written, are based to a large extent on the expected survival

improvements associated with each of the measures that are scheduled for implementation, under this spreadsheet.

It's an unfortunate situation, said Suzumoto, because while the CRFM program, as currently constituted, is basically an attempt to use research, monitoring and evaluation to arrive at an optimal recovery program, it would be unfortunate if the performance standards imposed in the BiOp shift that focus to implementation measures, prior to the time when we have the data needed to make an informed decision. If Congress does come through with adequate appropriations, of course, this will be a moot point, said Thor.

Research is going to be important in terms of identifying the incremental survival improvements associated with each of these capital construction projects, Rainey observed. Still, while the action agencies are going to be committed to meeting the BiOp performance standards, there are others in this room who do not agree that meeting those performance standards is the most appropriate goal for this program, said McCarty – for that reason, they aren't necessarily going to agree with the action agencies' priorities, and there is likely to be conflict between the two visions for the future of the system.

Do you have any specific suggestions about how the SCT process may need to be changed? McCarty asked. I think once we get the final BiOp and actually see the performance measures, that will be the time to have that discussion, Fodrea replied. Whatever they say, said Hevlin, it will still be critically important for the states, tribes and federal operators to sit down at the same table and provide their input into what is being proposed. In the past, these discussions have had a major impact on the program that actually gets funded each year, and I wouldn't expect that to change significantly in future years.

3. Progress Update on the Development of the B1 Decision Document and Five-Year Plan.

Kranda said there has been one Bonneville subgroup meeting to date, at which an attempt was made to capture all of the alternatives – operational and construction – that are being considered for Bonneville. We developed a pretty comprehensive set of alternatives and operational scenarios, said Kranda; we have had some preliminary discussions about the Simpass model. The next step is for some of the biologists to begin to develop numbers -- parameter bounds -- for Simpass input; it looks as though it will be mid-January before that meeting can take place, Kranda said. We're also continuing to develop cost estimates for each of the measures, Kranda said; hopefully, we'll have a fairly complete set of costs available in time for discussion at the January meeting

4. FY'02 CRFM Program.

It's probably too early to begin to discuss FY'02 prioritizations, given the funding situation, Hevlin said; however, if there are any additional items that need to be added to the FY'02 program, this would be a good time to raise them. Lorz asked that any deferred items from the FY'01 program be added to the FY'02 list; Hevlin replied that this has already been done. Kranda suggested that, as soon as it becomes available, the other SCT participants check the BiOp to be sure that all of the measures it calls for are included in the list. At McCarty's suggestion, Kranda said he will add a column that numbers each line-item on the spreadsheet. Marv Yoshinaka said he will discuss any additional items that should be added to the spreadsheet at next Tuesday's FPAC meeting.

5. Update on FY'01 AFEP Studies.

Rock Peters wanted me to say that, first of all, the number of proposals he has received to date is very small, Kranda said. He needs to develop a list of projects and their costs for SRWG, and soon, Kranda said. As soon as all of the proposals are received, Peters will make it available for SCT review. Rock is also trying to set up an SRWG meeting to discuss spillway survival and FPE studies at Bonneville, The Dalles and John Day for next Wednesday, December 20, Kranda said.

6. Next SCT Meeting Dates and Agenda Items.

The next meetings of the System Configuration Team were set for Thursday, January 18, Thursday, February 22 and Thursday, March 15. It was agreed to start these meetings at 9:30 a.m. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.